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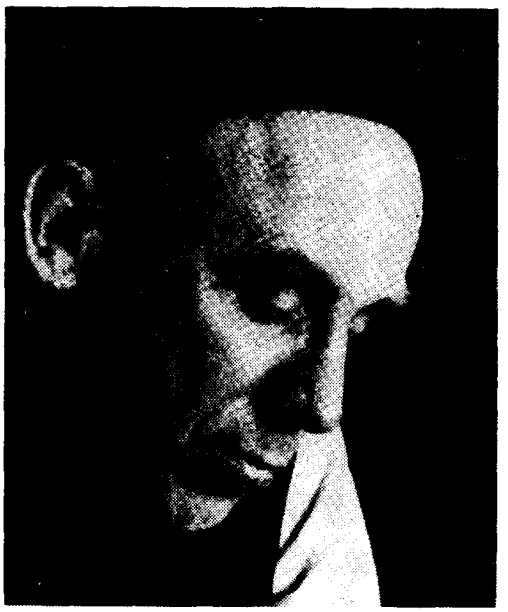

THOMAS MERTON AND THE DIVIDED POWER

BENJAMIN SALTMAN

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FROM GUNS TO POLITICS

JOHN COONEY

TRUE AND FALSE RECONCILIATION

PETER STEINFELS

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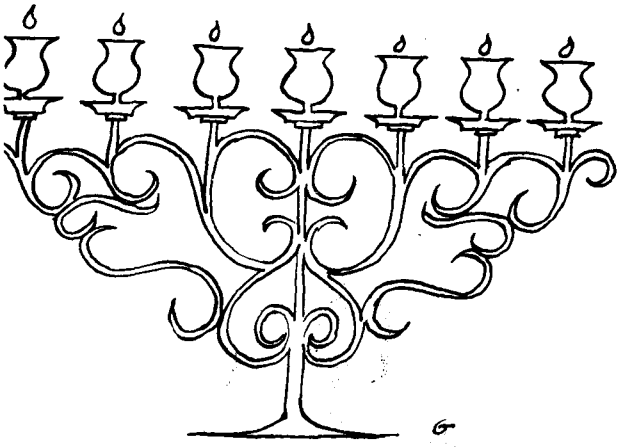

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NEWS & VIEWS

Emergency Powers

Before staffers of the Special Senate Committee on the Termination of the National Emergency got very deep into preparations for hearings on emergency power statutes, they made some amazing discoveries.

First, they incorrectly thought that the state of national emergency proclaimed by President Truman on Dec. 16, in response to both the invasion of Korea by Communist China and worries of Communist aggression worldwide, was the only such declaration. Research disclosed, however, that the U.S. had been in a state of declared national emergency since March 9, 1933!

That was when Congress, at the request of President Roosevelt, passed the Emergency Banking Act, allowing the President to exercise in peacetime what had originally been war powers. No one ever thought to declare the emergency ended and repeal the Act.

More significantly, Special Committee researchers found that nowhere in government —either in Congress or in the Executive branch—was there a complete catalogue of statutes and Executive Orders pertaining to emergency powers.

In April, in cooperation with the Library of Congress, the General Accounting Office and the Justice Department, the researchers undertook a computer hunt of all relevant statutes in the U.S. Code. The findings are now being collated by staff and shortly the Special Committee will issue what it calls "a reasonably complete (sic) catalogue of all emergency power statutes." The process is taking one month, which gives some idea of the inaccessibility of information one would expect to be immediately at hand.

The inconsistency and confusion involving national emergency powers lend urgency to the Special Senate Committee's efforts to uncover and review every emergency statute for the purpose of knowing how many exist, which are needed, which can be junked, which should be revised.

"It is sensible for the Legislative and Executive branches, working together, to lay out a reasonable, regular and consistent procedure for coping with future emergencies," the Special Committee declared in a joint statement. "Insofar as it is possible to prepare for future emergencies through statute, the Special Committee believes that it is beneficial to leave such a body of law, provided however that such statutes provide for effective oversight and for the termination of delegated authority when the state of emergency is no longer warranted."

At this juncture, the Special Committee has arrived at no more than a few preliminary, tentative conclusions on the subject—specifically:

"There is no consistent way in which emergencies are invoked, reviewed, or terminated. Emergencies in most cases are declared by the President, in a few by the Congress, in some cases jointly; in still others, heads of Departments can declare emergencies. A few statutes require reports or some process of review; most do not. Very few provide for a method of termination."

The Special Committee plans several blocks of hearings on the emergency-powers issue, the next one being slated for June. The Special Committee is to report back to the Senate by February, 1974.

'No-Fault' Divorce

A "no-fault" divorce proposal in the Minnesota Legislature received backing from a surprising source: the state's Catholic bishops.

John Markert, executive director of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, said that the action did not signify any change in the bishops' stance on divorce, nor did it mean that any of the bishops personally favor divorce.

Rather, he declared, the bishops, along with Protestant and Jewish leaders, believe the bill would allow the court to declare a "dead marriage" legally dead.

"There is no question," Markert added, "that divorce would be emotionally easier for all concerned under the bill, but it would not be legally easier."

The Minnesota bill would provide for the "dissolution" of the marriage contract on the grounds of "irretrievable breakdown in the marriage relationship." It is similar to laws in eight states which do not place legal "blame" for the divorce on one of the partners.

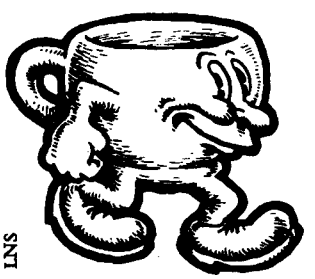
Hygiene of the Cup

Burning up the correspondence columns of the London *Times* recently was a controversy over the hygienics of sharing the cup at Holy Communion.

The debate was touched off when one Mrs. Dora Haley remarked that just as a finger-licking shop assistant wouldn't be long tolerated, neither should a church practice equally unsanitary —the passing of the communion cup from mouth to mouth.

Ah, the frenzy.

Bishop T. S. Garrett, Anglican, wrote in to say that "every time one comes in contact with infection . . . it builds up one's resistance." (How this immunity applied to one receiving for the first time or after a long abstinence during which resistance became run down, he didn't say.)



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Mrs. Pamela Vandyke Price was somewhat more heady. She reminded that wine is one of the oldest disinfectants known to man, "which is why wounds were washed with it." Thus sharing the cup is no more dangerous than sharing a bottle of Listerine: "the wine itself is a safeguard."

From the rectory at Codford in Wiltshire, the Rev. Sydney Linton opined that it was all a tempest in a Chalice. "The clergy, whose duty is to consume what remains after all have communicated, far from being more infected than the laity, have an above-average expectation of life," he added.

That would seem to have been the perfect last-word, but instead *The Times* awarded the amen to Mr. H.D.F. Taylor:

"Sir, The true believer at the Eucharist is not concerned with hygiene but trusts in God."

Odds and Ends

—The 16th annual memorial observance marking the death of Senator Joseph McCarthy was held May 5, together with the 4th commemoration of the death of Dr. Bella Dodd. Sponsor again was the right-wing St. Michael Forum, and the setting St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, where a solemn requiem Mass was offered.

—The Engineering School at Catholic University has accepted the ROTC as a course in humanities. Commented one professor sardonically: "Faculty members expect that in the near future the relevant study of the techniques to bomb Cambodia will replace the outdated course on the Gospels. It is also expected that later on ROTC analysis of Air Force management of the C-111 will replace the unpopular course on theological morality."

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Cardinal Virtues

Kitchener, Ontario

To the Editors: Re your editorial on "New Cardinals" [March 23]: —Just look at the graduation exercises in any American university; the color and pomp could rival Rome's. You Americans represent merely 7 percent of the Catholic Church. Remember that the rest belong to every other race and culture. The majority are solidly behind Rome.

Not only theoretically, but also practically, the Cardinals (even residentials like Roy and König) are the Pope's advisors. They represent the Catholic world fairly. The only defect is that there are 15 North American Cardinals while Latin America has only 20.

We have an uncomfortable feeling that the U.S.A. has played down its three new Cardinals only because none of them is a "Typical American": two are foreign-born; the third is a Puerto Rican.

Democratic election of bishops is risky. What kind of a bishop would be elected by people who are practicing artificial birth-control and abortion? What kind of a Pope would an abortion-oriented bishop elect? We have a deposit of faith to be preserved. It will be preserved . . . without democracy.

Old age is not necessarily a hindrance to good government. The aged Pope John, who gave us Vatican II, Chancellor Adenauer and DeGaulle of France, for example, all took office when they were well past retiring age.

The Bishops' Synod has a tough time to advise the Pope on one or two topics, once every two years. They have now requested that they have to do it, once every three. These bishops cannot dedicate themselves full time to their dioceses because they are so busy doing their homework for the Synod. And you want them to run the Church?

Tomorrow, you will complain that the noble American nation with its wealth and millions of Catholics, has

(Continued on page 247)

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EMBATTLED MEDIA FREEDOMS

The spectacular performance of portions of the press and television media with respect to Watergate would appear to refute certain negative assessments by the International Press Institute and the American Newspaper Publishers Association about the climate for communications' freedoms in the United States. Nothing, it seems, could testify more strongly to the health of the media and the operativeness of the First Amendment than the manner in which, for example, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and CBS, in descending order, have ferreted out the Watergate scandal, brought it to the threshold of the President's office, and survived to report the news another day. Only in a handful of countries would something even remotely akin to this be possible.

Beyond the Watergate headlines, however, there are increasing indications that the freedom guarantees of the First Amendment, while not in danger of being abrogated, do stand to be substantively tailored for the media, notably in the areas of data accessibility and confidentiality. The trends are depressing. State legislatures continue to back away from even moderate press-shield bills, and just the other day the Supreme Court, with only Justice Douglas dissenting, declined to review yet another reporter's criminal conviction for refusing to provide investigators with details of his reporting.

The tone for much of this is being orchestrated, of course, by the Nixon Administration—somewhat more subtly than was the case in 1969-70 when Vice President Agnew was in crescendo on the theme (and intimidating elements of the media in the process), but orchestrated nonetheless. Today the Administration, and Mr. Agnew especially, speak deferentially of the media and Mr. Agnew is even stressing the necessity of "the free flow of information." Nevertheless, the Administration still moves in on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting so as to restrict the amount of public-affairs programming; it makes a sham of reform of the federal classification system by retaining millions of nonvital documents as secret and leaving no less than 18,000 officials in a position to classify information; and now it has come forth with a proposed criminal law reform that not only would tighten restrictions on classified materials, but so extend legal liabilities as

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to make even the most circumspect ex-President think twice about writing any memoirs. As the *Washington Post* remarked, the proposed measure would create a law "designed for a land governed by tyrants and inhabited by boobs."

Perhaps the Administration, chastened by Watergate, will radically temper its proposals. If it does not, the responsibility increases on Congress to deal sternly with them.

In similar context, Congress is in n advantageous position to fortify First Amendment guarantees by legislating positively on the prerogatives of journalists. No less than 40 bills have been introduced in the current Congress to guarantee the rights of reporters. While these rights may not be absolute, they obviously need some explicit reaffirmation in the wake of opinion emanating from the four Nixon appointees to the High Court and from Justice White in the precedent-setting Branzburg and related media cases.

A concomitant in all of this, naturally, is "the American people's need to know," a point being stressed by Davis Taylor of the *Boston Globe*, chairman of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. "Our democracy," he adds, "is in serious trouble if a free press is restricted." These are, by now, clichés, but, as Watergate has underscored, far from being irrelevant ones.

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WHITE PAPER ON IRELAND

FROM GUNS TO POLITICS

The long-awaited publication of the British Government's White Paper on "Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals" did not, as feared, turn out to be the signal for immediate and outright civil war between Catholics and Protestants. While nobody was pleased with everything in the White Paper, everybody was at least prepared to examine its contents. Consequently, an important effect of the proposals was that after more than three years of violence the politicians in Northern Ireland at last have the chance of seizing the initiative away from the gunmen.

Although the proposals only offer the framework for political normality and social stability, they do provide the basis for a peaceful solution. If Thomas Jefferson were alive today, he would applaud this attempt by the British Secretary for Northern Ireland, Mr. William Whitelaw, to dismantle sectarianism and establish Northern society on a sound secular constitutional basis. In short, if successfully implemented, the White Paper proposals could represent a major step forward in the direction of a society devoid of sectarianism and freed from terror.

Briefly summarized, the White Paper provides for a unicameral 80-seat Assembly, which will be elected by proportional representation and whose executive power will be shared by the Catholic minority. London will, however, retain control of all functions connected with law enforcement and the administration of justice. The office of Secretary of State, at present held by Mr. Whitelaw, will be retained.

The proposals provide for the enactment of a Charter of Rights. In addition to stringent provision against discrimination in the public sector, there will also be legislation against job discrimination in the private sector. The British Government also states its intent to carry out a program of reconstruction and to raise Northern Ireland living standards to that of British levels.

The British Government proposes to hold a conference representing the London and Dublin Governments, and the new Northern Ireland Assembly, with a view to making arrangements for closer cooperation between both parts of Ireland. Although it is generally considered that Britain favors the setting up of a Council of Ireland, the section on North-South cooperation in Ireland is vague.

Following the elections to the Assembly, in late June, committees will be set up, each reflecting, as far as possible, the balance of power within the Assembly. The Chairman of each committee will be the political head of a Department, and the committee chairmen will form the Executive. They, and the Chief Executive (formerly Prime Minister) will be chosen following discussions between the parties and Mr. Whitelaw. The Executive must represent both communities.

Since the establishment of Northern Ireland Government within the United Kingdom in 1920, the Unionist Party had been dominant and had over the years institutionalized its philosophy of Protestant Supremacy by discrimination against the Catholic minority, which tended to look not towards Britain and the Crown but towards the Republic and a United Ireland. The violence of the Provisional IRA campaign in the past few years had helped bring about the fall of Stormont (the Northern Ireland Parliament). But, amidst the ongoing violence Northern Ireland still remained a divided society in which political allegiances were polarized between loyalism and republicanism.

Against this background the White Paper proposals had to have as the basic aim the ending of polarization

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by the creation of what Northern Ireland never had: a political center. To a large extent the proposals achieved this aim as four main political groups gave their support with varying degrees of consent to the White Paper.

The Alliance party (basically moderates who have left the Unionist Party) unanimously welcomed the proposals calling on the people of Northern Ireland to grasp the opportunity for a peaceful and a just society. The Social Democratic and Labor party pronounced basically in favor of the proposals but expressed concern at the maintenance of detention without trial, and disappointment over the lack of an immediately established Council of Ireland. The Nationalist party appealed to all sections of the Northern Ireland public to give the White Paper a chance in the interests of peace and in order to avoid further human suffering. The Northern Ireland Labor party also welcomed the proposals.

Arguably, the Unionist party too, broadly accepted the White Paper. After some hesitation the party endorsed the immediately expressed view of Mr. Brian Faulkner, its leader and former Prime Minister, that the proposals should be welcomed in principle, while in practice seeking amendments more favorable to Unionism.

However, a number of loyalists completely rejected the White Paper as a "sell-out" and joined together to mount a campaign against its acceptance. Rev. Ian Paisley, the Westminster M.P. and leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, and Mr. William Craig, the ultra-loyalist Vanguard Movement leader, joined forces to establish the Vanguard Unionist Progressive party. Mr. Craig, who then resigned from the Unionist Party, explained that he aimed to use the system to get a power base within the new Assembly from which the loyalists could challenge Britain and achieve the Constitution that they want.

Even if the loyalist militants intend to oppose the White Paper, they are at least contesting the elections and attempting to do so constitutionally even if their professed aim is to make a sham of the White Paper if they gain a majority in the Assembly. At least, the ominous question of Protestant loyalist para-military activity recedes until after the election.

A main and crucial test of the White Paper has been the reaction of the Provisional IRA. The Provisionals rejected the White Paper but in terms which presented not so much an outright dismissal of the proposals as a challenge to make it possible for the Provisional Sinn Fein (the political wing of the IRA) to contest local government and Assembly elections. At the time of writing there is speculation as to whether the Provisionals will intensify their campaign of violence or whether Mr. Whitelaw will lift the ban on the political participation of Sinn Fein in return—perhaps, for some cease-fire agreement.

Reaction to the White Paper in the Republic was basically favorable. The Prime Minister of the new Coalition Government, Mr. Liam Cosgrave, said that his Government saw in the document "proposals which could help towards a solution." He regretted that the Council of Ireland had not been outlined in greater detail, but he declared that his Government was "ready to enter into discussions with all the parties concerned" for a bipartite Council of Ireland. Mr. Jack Lynch, the former Prime Minister and now leader of the opposition party, Fianna Fail, said that the White Paper contained the basis for reconciliation between the two communities and for fair representation. He urged the agenda for the conference about the Council of Ireland "must be open-ended and without preconditions."

Also prominent in publicity surrounding the announcement of the White Paper were the various Churches in Ireland. If the starkness of the violence has brought them to recognize their contribution towards the divisions in Irish society, the White Paper was an occasion for their cooperation in appealing to news media, workers and to politicians to study the proposals carefully and responsibly. In particular, there was cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish Council of Churches. If much has still to be undertaken on the ecumenical front by the Irish Churches, the pattern of partnership has at last been established..

As the various political groups prepare for the elections, observers have noted that it will be important for the center parties to cooperate in using the system of proportional representation to their mutual advantage. The degree of electoral collaboration will be a test of whether the resolutions about a moderate center base can be implemented. This has to be achieved despite the possibility that the men of violence on the loyalist and the Provisional side might choose to resort to further violence for their own ends. JOHN COONEY

(John Cooney, on the staff of the Irish Times, *this week becomes* Commonweal*'s regular correspondent in Ireland.)*

COMING

ADOLPH SCHALK writes on German Catholicism ten years after Vatican Council II:

"There has been a 50 percent decline in ordinations over the past five years. Last year alone, some 10 percent of the secular clergy and more than 20 percent of religious opted for laicization. A religious house is shut down on an average of one a week. . . . Hundreds of churches stand nearly empty Sunday after Sunday. According to the prestigious Allensbach Institute, only 35 percent of registered Roman Catholics regularly attend Sunday Mass. Ten percent do not go at all, and less than 20 percent attend in the cities."

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TRUE AND FALSE RECONCILIATION

PETER STEINFELS

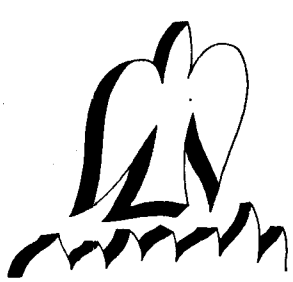
GOOD FRIDAY had turned into Holy Saturday; the all-night vigil at St. Gregory the Great parish in Manhattan was at its halfway point; and Sister Elizabeth McAlister was speaking in her quiet manner to about sixty parishioners gathered in the church. The topic was amnesty, and Sister McAlister, to the surprise of some of her listeners, had just declared she was against it.

Amnesty means forgetting, Sister McAlister reminded her listeners; and then she began a swift elaboration of the themes of remembering and forgetting in the Old and New Testaments. From Passover to the Last Supper, God's people were given the injunction to reenact the meal in remembrance of God's saving act. The accusation of Yahweh against the Israelites was that they had forgotten him, while their prayer to him was that he would remember the promises he had made to his faithful servants, Abraham and Moses. Remember me when you come into your kingdom, was the Good Thief's plea to Jesus.

America, added Sister McAlister, is a very forgetful nation, wiping from its consciousness all the underside of its history, its racism, ruthlessness and imperialism, leaving itself unprepared to recognize and repair its immoral deeds. If amnesty means adding another layer of forgetfulness, erasing acts of resistance which should be remembered, then Sister McAlister, as well as most of those she knew in the anti-war movement, would have none of it.

Not all of those present at St. Gregory's agreed. Two years ago I had written about amnesty for the little paperback volume *When Can I Come Home?*, edited by Murray Polner. I argued then that the amnesty proposal was ambiguous, that it could symbolize legitimation of the war protest or legitimation of the government granting amnesty, or both. Amnesty involved risks to the principles of both sides in the debate over the war. It was a compromise, and one which I favored. However, the meaning of amnesty would probably be determined, finally, by the circumstances in which it was debated, by the constellations of forces opposing and supporting it, by the manner in which it was actually implemented. Thus, if it comes to the do-their-two-years-of-penitential-service-and-we-will-forgive-them kind of amnesty now in the air, I must agree with Sister McAlister. There are compromises and there are compromises.

That night at St. Gregory's, the discussion of amnesty led, as it was meant to, to the wider subject of "reconciliation." The word is on many lips. The Easter letter of the Cardinal of New York spoke of reconciliation —and linked it to the two-years-service amnesty proposal. I find this troubling, and so do many others. Reconciliation expresses a reality for which many of us long. But is it not also a slogan asking us to deny or ignore all that has been struggled over in the last seven years?



There is, it seems, a true and a false reconciliation. I am not the Solomon who can pronounce exactly where the one ends and the other begins. But it does not require such wisdom to recognize the essential falseness of dropping the whole conflict over the Vietnamese war down an Orwellian Memory Hole, above all at a time when our bombs still fall on Vietnam's neighbors and may fall again, so Washington rumbles, on the North. There is an essential falseness in approaching the topic of amnesty as a replay of the parable of the Prodigal Son. The casting is wrong: the son did not go to foreign lands to squander his property with harlots; the nation, represented by its leaders, is not a guiltless and generous Father (God) welcoming back—slight modification here for the two years service—the Prodigal. There is an essential falseness in pretending that the war was *only* the doing of a small body of policymakers and that it did not reveal deep differences in the nation at large about perceptions of right and wrong.

On the other hand, true reconciliation would be a reconciliation at a level which is genuinely higher than that of our differences. Christian reconciliation in the Eucharist is an example. Reconciliation in a fluffed up spirit of patriotism, or simply in a mood of weariness, is not.

There are some things which we should not be reconciled about. I think we should be willing to live with that. What nonetheless makes reconciliation such an attractive motif, is the realization that there are many things about which we are divided—and have no real reason to be. It is this which leaves the sour taste after our struggles: that there were divisions which were needless, affronts which were uncalled for, conflicts which were gratuitous and diversionary. We might rephrase the maxim of the ecumenical movement to suit this particular problem of the aftermath of the war: "In essentials, division; in all the rest, reconciliation."

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THOMAS MERTON AND THE DIVIDED POWER

BENJAMIN SALTMAN

The problems of an American religious poet

If I once had a wagon of lights to ride in
The axle is broken
The horses are shot.
(Merton, "The Lion," 1967)

I

It is painful to watch a poet lose the joy he once had in his experience; it is doubly painful to watch him, if he is a mystic, seem to recede slowly from a center of light which once suffused his life. The career of a mystic, one hopes, and the spiritual recipes agree, should proceed by gradual if agonizing steps toward the light. The illumination once reached, we would not be surprised if the mystic retires to serene and silent holiness. On a number of counts the career of the late Thomas Merton, mystic, priest, poet, Catholic apologist, social critic, is disappointing. It comes to us as renewed testimony on the highly individual and desperately quixotic nature of the relation between God and man.

At the start Merton's simplicity as a poet set him apart from the ambiguities with which his contemporaries, still in the throes of Eliot, were concerned. On the whole he was a happy man whose ascetic life as a Trappist seemed to release his soul for flight. When he entered the monastery in 1941 at the age of 26, he had found his calling, a calling not so much to engage in a search for faith as to celebrate the love of God and the sense of God's power. As a poet he adopted basically two roles. In the first he was a mystic trying to express the joy of contemplation and the contemplative life. In the second he was an angry critic of modern society, of its aggressive inhumanity and confused values. Reacting to the disaster of the Second World War, he saw modern man heading for apocalyptic destruction.

Merton's practice of contemplative prayer was the center of his religious life and the touchstone to which he referred his experience of the world. Yet he did not write a poetry strictly within the context of contemplative prayer, in the manner of St. John of the Cross, but instead tried to convey a sense of the natural world and of the spirit's action upon it. Like St. John, he felt that God was present both beyond and in the world, but he wanted especially to confront the reader with what this meant. He started with a belief that the world is a sign of God. As he wrote to his friend and former teacher, Mark Van Doren, "The earliest fathers knew that all things, as such, are symbolic by their very being and nature, and all talk of something beyond themselves. Their meaning is not something we impose upon them, but a mystery which we can discover in them, if we have the eyes to look with."

Merton was also aware of a need to dramatize the existence of spirit in things, of God in the world. With an exuberance reminiscent of the Psalms he celebrated God's power and, at the same time, suggested *how* that power acts in a world of sense-experience cut off from it:

And I go forth with no more wine and no
more stars
And no more buds and no more Eden
And no more animals and no more sea:
While God sings by Himself in acres of night
And walls fall down, that guarded Paradise.
("A Psalm," 1949)

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He wanted to attain a paradoxical, fulfilled silence beyond the buzz of the world and all of the objects of sense. He wanted to express a condition beyond "wine" and "stars," "buds" and "Eden," yet *avoid* appealing to the mystical tradition of ineffability. In the early poetry of the '40s he was not interested in spiritual struggle or in describing a process of transformation from a lower to a higher spiritual state; instead he published the triumphant results of the struggle. His simple lyric relationship to experience rendered him incapable of questioning the validity of his anger, his joy, or his commitment to God.

In place of subtlety, Merton's early verse has a fresh, thoughtless vigor, and complete confidence in a world that exists beyond the sensual ear. Merton sends his vision of spirit trampling out into the world, subduing it as if the world exists only to testify to the pervasive power of his faith; in "St. Malachy" he writes:

> In November, in the days to remember
> the dead
> When air smells cold as earth,
> St. Malachy, who is very old, gets up,
> Parts the thin curtain of trees and dawns upon
> our land.
>
> His coat is filled with drops of rain, and he
> is bearded
> With all the seas of Poseidon.
> (Is it a crozier, or a trident in his hand?)
> He weeps against the gothic window, and the
> empty cloister
> Mourns like an ocean shell.
>
> ("St. Malachy," 1949)

In Merton's hands, personification does more than represent the existence of human qualities in nature; it represents the dominance of spirit *over* nature. Later in the same poem, when Merton expresses the joy of singing hymns on St. Malachy's Day, the images disregard the limitations of a cold chapel and a rainy day, and represent the capacity of faith to transform human life:

> So the bells rang and we opened the anti-
> phoners
> And the wrens and larks flew up out of
> the pages.
> Our thoughts became lambs. Our hearts swam
> like seas.

The phrases do not really describe anything that one might see; the reader, confronting birds, lambs and seas in quick succession, is virtually told not to pay any real attention to those images as images but to accept them rather as expressions of feeling. The poet capitalizes on *the irrelevance of the images to the physical circumstances* in which the monks find themselves—or happily lose themselves.

Unlike most modern poets, then, Merton did not try to discipline his imagination into tight relevance to a physical situation, or to the transforming process undergone by a specific sensibility moving gradually through time. There is a sharp contrast to the clear-eyed descriptions and metaphors of Roethke, Shapiro, or Jarrell. But behind an apparently unregulated imagination Merton kept another kind of discipline, which commanded nature to perform for God. His images in "On a Day in August" (1949) maintain a tenuous connection with a specific day and, at the same time, sketch a moral condition which—to the poet—is more important than the day:

> Very well, clouds,
> Open your purple bottles,
> Cozen us never more with blowsy cotton:
> But organize,
> Summon the punishing lightning:
> Spring those sudden gorgeous trees against
> the dark
> Curtain of apocalypse you'll hang to earth,
> from heaven:
> Let five white branches scourge the land
> with fire!
> And when the first fat drops
> Spatter upon the tin tip of our church like
> silver dollars
> And thoughts come bathing back to mind
> with a new life,
> Prayer will become our new discovery
> When God and His bad earth once more
> make friends.

Merton says "bad earth" the way a boy might say "Bad dog!" to his pet. God is so much more vital and valid than the earth that his punishment sustains rather than injures. The images tell us what earth is being punished for: drunkenness ("purple bottles"), sensuality ("blowsy cotton"), greed ("fat drops"), and avarice ("silver dollars"). The images are far-fetched, yet they manage to portray the scene: rain looking like a curtain on the horizon; lightning like a candelabrum; the heavy rattle of the first drops of a summer rain. The images jostle each other; the effect is giddy; and yet the theme is clear: God punishes man with man's own wickedness in order to purify him.

In a way, therefore, Merton gloried in the dissociation of image and abstraction, mingling these two qualities of language only to stress a distinction between them.

> How long we wait with minds as dim
> as ponds.
>
> ("How Long We Wait," 1946)

> Our thoughts went in and out in whiter coats

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than God's disciples.

("Cana," 1946)

His thoughts are skies of cloudless peace.

("Duns Scotus," 1947)

The intellects go mumbling in the snow.

("Spring Storm," 1959)

In these metaphors we have a kind of dissociation of sensibility, but dissociation was precisely what Merton wanted in order to celebrate a tenuous relationship between abstraction and image. It seems inevitable that an unsentimental modern reader will not find much to admire in this kind of imagination. Almost nothing in Merton compares with the imagination of Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose intense metaphors give us the exact color of an ember, the movement of a bird, the earthen body of the world. In other words, Merton was content to have two worlds, a world of spirit and

a world of things, and to use images in such a way as to demonstrate his confidence in spiritual life, to say such things as (in "To the Immaculate Virgin, on a Winter Night," 1949):

The stars come out and freeze my heart
With drops of untouchable music . . .

The reader who is driven to inquire what Merton could possibly mean by a heart frozen with drops of untouchable music is bound to be disappointed, for the poet is simply comparing the appearance of a star with the appearance of a drop, the star's light with a drop of light falling from an immense distance, and is attesting to the immense distance between himself and spiritual peace.

Merton told the story of his conversion to Catholicism in a fine spiritual autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948), the great quality of which is a remarkable innocence of heart. Merton emerges as a young man with a genuine and unequivocal thirst for truth, a delight in prayer, and confidence in the life to which he dedicates himself. It was his confidence that was remarkable, that set him apart from Brother Antoninus and Robert Lowell, two other poets converted to Catholicism at around the same period. All three poets fairly burst with the images of their new faith, and all three seem to find themselves as poets by virtue of it. But Antoninus and Lowell both let us feel the strain of their effort to express themselves as they drive toward an imaginative grasp of physical experience; Merton is at this time a dazzled child of faith.

In the late '40s Merton tried to tell us what the experience of God is like. In order to do this he created a special realm of spirit, where ordinary conditions of existence did not apply. In this realm the soul played like a child—free, giddy, excited, but safe:

But in the dazzled, high and unelectric air
Seized in the talons of the Terrible Dove,
The huge, unwounding Spirit,
We suddenly escape the drag of earth
Fly from the dizzy paw of gravity
And swimming in the wind that lies beyond
the track
Of thought and genius and of desire,
Trample the white, appalling stratosphere.

("Song: Contemplation," 1947)

The flight is dazzling but unelectric, the Spirit is terrible but unwounding. There is no doubt that Merton was describing an experience, whether he actually attained it or not, which other mystics have also described. In a rare passage, in his *Secular Journal* (1959), he gives us an idea of what his actual experience was. As he describes it, he was attending Mass in Cuba in 1940, when suddenly "the unshakable certainty, the clear and immediate knowledge that heaven was right in front of me, struck me like a thunderbolt and went through me like a flash of lightning and seemed to lift me clear off the earth." This kind of confidence and knowledge suddenly attained he tried to convert later into poetry: "Word, the whole universe swells with Thy wide-open speed,/Father, the world bursts, breaks, huge Spirit, with Thy might" ("Hymn for the Feast of Duns Scotus," 1949).

But I would be wrong to give the impression that Merton had no regard for the world of things. Although he was no more a nature poet than an allegorist, he often set his scenes amid the fields and trees around Our Lady of Gethsemani Monastery in Kentucky, his home when he became a monk. He would take an occasion for poetry in a scene in "April" or "The Winter's Night"; or he might describe "Trappists, Working"; or compose an "Elegy for the Monastery Barn" which burned down. Yet as a lover of God who would not take the world too seriously, he usually found ways to emphasize his detachment; in "St. Malachy" he could write that the "air smells cold as earth," but not that the"air smells like cold earth." The alternative phrasing is perhaps more accurate, but it does not have the quality of vastness and buoyancy for which Merton sacrificed what he could.

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Thus Merton described the world and yet searched for ways to avoid pinning us down to it. His double intention explains why some of his descriptions are weak. When he wrote of the joy of entering monastic life, his words corresponded to the simple physical reality of the walls and windows of his monastery; from his point of view it was appropriate for him to exult as he conceived of the fallen world arising in the simple form of the monastery buildings:

> And look, the ruins have become Jerusalems,
> And the sick cities re-arise like shining
> Sions!
> Jerusalems, these walls and rooms,
> These bowers and fragrant sheds,
> Our desert's wooden door,
> The arches, and the windows, and the tower!
> (" A Letter to My Friends," 1946)

In one sense the reader can sympathize with Merton's feelings as he sees the world transformed before his eyes; but in another sense we know that he has failed as a poet to transform that world.

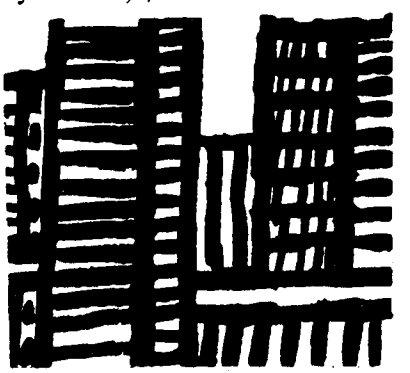
In an excellent essay on poetry and contemplation, Merton investigated the problems a contemplative might have if he is also a poet. The first version of this essay appeared in 1947 as "Poetry and the Contemplative Life." Twelve years later he published "Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal." In both versions, his essential point is the same: as he says in the first, the writing of poetry can help the contemplative, but "when we are entering the realm of true contemplation . . . it may turn around and bar our way." The contemplative must therefore be prepared to sacrifice his poetry. He must avoid the temptation which beauty represents to the soul as it places itself before God. The mind may become fascinated by its own play or by the objects of its attention, and mistake aesthetic for spiritual delight.

Merton's revised statement in 1959 does not change this view essentially, but this time he carefully emphasizes his point that there is no *essential* opposition between poetry and contemplation. He writes that a conflict between poetry and contemplation, if it occurs, may exist only when the latter is considered in its "most perfect sense." But he is speaking of the highest form of beauty, not the "things which are called 'beautiful' by the decadent standards of a materialistic world." This lower kind of beauty must be sacrificed immediately by those who want to enter "more deeply into the beauty of the Christian mystery." Given this Christian commitment, the poet may "ascend to the greatest heights of poetic creation and of mystical prayer without any evident contradiction between them." So there is a profane beauty which every contemplative must sacrifice, and a Christian beauty which the contemplative poet must be prepared to sacrifice but which, if it pleases God, may accompany him to the heights.

This is very clear advice for those artists who wish to be contemplatives, but Merton does not consider the possibility that beauty at its highest level may contain elements of the profane, the sensual, the materialistic. Out of his own innocence and confidence, he apparently feels that one may simply step through a door from the profane world into the sacred world, the very door (the relation between the values of the spirit and the values of the body) which provides the basis of tension and of imaginative effort in most modern poetry.

II

There was another Merton who gradually gained control of the poet, a Merton who was losing touch with the light. This was the Merton whose mind was turned angrily toward the world, warning it, castigating it; at the same time increasingly aware of the desiccation of his own spirit. In "Aubade—the City" (1946), images capture the frustration and commercialism, the combination of threat and weakness which city life means to the poet. The windows in the morning "question, with their weak-eyed stare, / The riotous sun." As people



awaken, windows begin to close along the faces of the tall buildings "like figures in a long division." People who have lain awake all night still lie in bed staring "like wolves, / Tied in the tangle of the bedding." These city-dwellers, who have forced themselves to avoid contact with their own hearts, are frightened of what spiritual life may ask of them. They must begin the only life they know:

> Pieces of paper, lying in the streets,
> Will start up, in the twisting wind,
> And fly like idiot birds before the faces of the crowds.
> And in the roar of buildings
> Elevator doors will have begun
> To clash like sabres.

The reader can hear and see what the poet is after, the sound of the marble lobbies, the clash of the steel inner doors of what are now old-fashioned elevators. When Merton's mood was dark, when he was not trying to portray a state of contemplative prayer, he often tightened his images toward greater accuracy than he otherwise attempted.

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At his most bitter he adopted a style of extreme irony, through which he depicted man's failure even to attain human values, much less spiritual ones. The Nazis' methodical destruction of the Jews is the subject of "Chant to Be Used in Processions Around a Site with Furnaces" (1963). The commander of a gas chamber is the speaker. The prose poem, divided into irregular paragraphs without internal punctuation, reflects the commander's complete absence of feeling as he speaks monotonously, stringing his statements together with a syntax which suggests his inability to evaluate what he is saying:

> It was a very big bathroom for two thousand people it awaited arrival and they arrived safely

Oblique references remind us of the suffering of the Jews:

> How I commanded and made soap 12 lbs fat 10 quarts water 8 oz to a lb of caustic soda but it was hard to find any fat

In the end the "commander" addresses the reader directly:

> Do not think yourself better because you burn up friends and enemies with long-range missiles without ever seeing what you have done

If such directness resembled the moral style adopted by Beat poets in their attempt to address popular audiences, Merton was, in his own way, even more alienated from modern society than the Beats. Allen Ginsberg's poetry suggests the hysteria of a man who would have accepted worldly values if he could have survived through them. Merton's anger transcends personal misery, however, and is based on a life which is so meaningful to him that he is upset when other men cannot recognize that meaning. Aware of the enormous gift Christianity offers, he was aghast that other men proceed to their destruction without paying attention to the gift. When "Chant Around a Site with Furnaces" appeared in 1963, it was typical of the growing bitterness of Merton's later work, and of his loss of light. In his earlier poems, he expressed his dismay over the world in the more hopeful terms of the Christian Apocalypse, with its promise of the saving power of Christ:

> There is no war will not obey this cup of Blood,
> This wine in which I sink Thy words, in the anonymous dawn!
> I hear a Sovereign talking in my arteries
> Reversing, with His Promises, all things
> That now go on with fire and thunder.
> ("Senescente Mundo," 1949)

Perhaps this quality of essential hope in the midst of destruction contributed to the humor of his early apocalyptic poems (see *Figures for an Apocalypse*, 1947) years before the appearance of the extravagant poetry of the Beat apocalyptics. In 1956, the year when Ginsberg's *Howl* was published, Merton in *The Living Bread* tried to distinguish a Christian Last Judgment from a "certain false mysticism":

> There is a certain false mysticism which likes to gloat over the prospect of a Last Judgment in which the whole history of mankind will fall into oblivion under the anathema of an enraged God. But the true Christian viewpoint is that which looks forward to the Last Judgment as the clarification and vindication of human history.

Merton may have felt that his own use of Christian terms was being compromised, and that a confused public would not understand what he meant by them. At any rate, his "Advice to a Young Prophet" (1963) must have been directed against Ginsberg as the reigning seer of the Beat movement. As an older statesman of the soul, and as a man who had no more sympathy than Ginsberg for the American way of life, he nevertheless felt that the misguided "younger" prophet was wasting his time and flirting with damnation: "Keep away, son, these lakes are salt." The "anaemic thunder" of a confused, publicity-conscious poet is not going to help America or the poet:

> O go home, brother, go home!
> The devil's back again,
> And magic Hell is swallowing flies.

But there is an air of disillusion about Merton's later poetry, a quality which seems to be part of the patchy experimental styles he tries and drops. In the '50s, American poets as a whole moved away from the use of Christian imagery. Merton was part of this movement, yet, unlike Lowell, could not seem to find satisfactory substitutes for symbols which, after all, he literally believed in. His last poems represent a quest for primitive power, perhaps through Azrael, "The Moslem's Angel of Death"; or Ixion, "Giant war Ixion / Rolling and fighting on the red wheel" ("Gloss on the Sin of Ixion," 1963); or the jungle primitivism of "The Early Legend: Six Fragments of Work in Progress" (1964); or the wildly aggressive ironies of *Cables to the Ace* (1968). In his earlier poetry he never asserted the traditional belief that contemplative experience is ineffable. But in 1963 he wrote:

> Pardon all runners,
> All speechless, alien winds,
> All mad waters.
>
> Pardon their impulses,
> Their wild attitudes,
> Their young flights, their reticence.

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When a message has no clothes on
How can it be spoken?
("A Messenger from the Horizon")

In one of his last poems, "Notes for a New Liturgy" (1968) there is evident bitterness about the church itself, about the confusion of society also—so that confusion is heaped upon confusion. This is the Merton who, just before his death, is disaffected with the conventions of monastic life, and looking to Eastern religions, especially Zen, for answers to the liturgical clutter of Judeo-Christian tradition. The poem begins,

There's a big Zulu runs our congregation
A woe doctor cherubim chaser
Puts his finger on the chief witch. . . .

Here is an ironic updating of religion, an obscure mockery yet acceptance of primitivism. Merton's contempt of God as "Prime-Mover in Management" is ambiguous, for his rejection of such a God is also an expression of rueful loss:

"Last night I dreamt of four beds
I must marry again must go get
Another angel-nun
Come holy deaconess we'll ride
Barefoot in yellow busses to Jordan River. . . ."

And he ends brutally:

"HOLD THIS MITRE WHILE I STRANGLE
CHICKENS
AND THROW THEM IN THE AIR
COVERING THE SACRED STONE WITH
BLOODY FEATHERS
(And surround the altar
With lie detectors.")

Merton lived on into a time when the symbols, the clothes of his faith, seemed corrupt, when his joyous spirit was overwhelmed by bitterness or silence, when grief hid in irony. But there *was* a time when he felt that it was possible to find clothes for his faith, when he could leap from sense through a zone of silence to a realm where soundless tears could fall like bells. He wrote a fine elegy, "For My Brother: Reported Missing in Action, 1943," in his years of high innocence and faith:

For in the wreckage of your April Christ lies slain,
And Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring:
The money of Whose tears shall fall
Into your weak and friendless hand,
And buy you back to your own land:

The silence of Whose tears shall fall
Like bells upon your alien tomb.
Hear them and come: they call you home.

We should remember him, as a poet, for this. He never wrote better.

THE SCREEN

About a third of the way through *A Touch of Class* a scene occurs in which Steve Blackburn (George Segal) and Vicki Allesio (Glenda Jackson) go berserk hurling the contents of their suitcases at each other. There also happens to be a desk clerk present, however, and it is on him that director Melvin Frank fixes our attention. As Steve and Vicki attempt to pelt each other with clothes, this poor fellow stands between them getting it from both directions. Every time he recovers his balance a peignoir enters right, a pair of golf slacks enters left, and he lands back on the floor again, his head swathed in writhing fabric. The aptness of the clerk's insertion in this scene is the way he demonstrates what Frank thinks funny. It is the predicament of the man in the middle that Frank's direction emphasizes throughout the film.

In truth the hapless desk clerk is only a stand-in for Steve himself, who is the real man in the middle in this film. Since *A Touch of Class* is about an affair that Vicki has with Steve, it is obviously about both lovers. Yet the focus stays on him and his problems. Her life is seen primarily as one of the two epicenters of his life. The other epicenter assumes a variety of roles but always represents the keeping up of appearances, respectability, the claims that Steve's wife and children make on him, etc.

When Vicki refuses to be a quickie, Steve books a flight for them from London, where they both live, to Malaga, where they can make love at a relaxed pace. But after he tells the airlines agent the second ticket is for his mother, Vicki comes to collect it in person and betrays his discreet lie. Then his family returns unexpectedly from their holiday, and he has only just escaped all of them when he runs into an old friend, also bound for Malaga, at the airport. Each of these interruptions shifts Vicki's and Steve's story from them to him. The film becomes a tug of war as seen from the perspective of the rope.

The clothes fight that Vicki and Steve have in their hotel room at Malaga is the high point of the film, whose one weakness is that this point comes too early. Up to this moment the film has been building steadily as Vicki and Steve grow to dislike each other before even getting well acquainted. The fight is the climax of this abortive first stage of their affair, and when it's over they fall happily into bed, and in love. This is where they make their mistake. All romantic comedies begin to flag as soon as the principals quit hating each other and fall in love. There is a kind of emotional release when Vicki and Steve flop on the bed, and as a

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result the tension necessary to keep the comedy going escapes. It always happens at this point. Vicki and Steve now find their fight as funny as we did; but as soon as they begin laughing at it, we quit. In a comedy like this it's an act of Original Sin when the characters start laughing at themselves.

When he first propositioned Vicki, Steve claimed that he never cheats on his wife while they are in the same city. It's a principle he should have stuck to. For when he and Vicki try to move their affair back to London, all the unexpectedness goes out of the plot. Like their love life, the film settles into a fairly predictable sex-comedy routine. This is disappointing not just for us, but for them too. Vicki at first declined Steve's advances because she didn't want a quickie in the rather sordid hotel room where he had taken her. But when they finally make their arrangement permanent back in London, they take an apartment in a run-down building where all the other tenants are hookers. What's more, Steve can only manage to meet her there while he's out walking the dog after dinner, or taking a cigarette break during a concert at the Albert Hall. Although she may not realize it, Vicki has settled for a quickie in a sordid room after all. This is the ironic pin prick through which the romance—and, unfortunately, the comedy—slowly seeps.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

an exchange of views

Rollo May on Power

Milwaukee, Wisc.

To the Editors: Ronald Sampson's somewhat shrill review of Rollo May's *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* [Feb. 9] is far off the mark. May, distinguished psychiatrist and author, seemed to me throughout the book to be struggling with human realities which he has only recently seen in a new perspective.

I sympathize with Dr. May. The word "power" like the word "politics" in the U.S. citizen's vocabulary has such a connotation of unrelieved evil that it is a recurring temptation for writers and speakers to use sweeter synonyms in its place. Add to that, as Professor Sampson does, our present guilt over using the power of our armies and military ordnance to crush civil wars in Indochina, and we may have to refrain from using the word in ordinary discourse, as Karl Barth once suggested the retirement of the overburdened word, church, for several generations.

But the problem is not really linguistics. The problem is a liberal, reformist, and in the case of Professor Sampson, a utopian view of how things get decided in a democratic society implanted in a still imperfect world.

Let Dr. May call a few witnesses.

Ask Cesar Chavez if power is a bad word. Chavez admits that he works with farm workers so that together they can build "an organization to acquire power to change a system in which they have no power."

Ask poor city residents faced with cutbacks in federal funds for anti-poverty programs about power. They are learning an old, but difficult lesson: "What the Man gives, he can as easily take away." If they had organized for power and independence in accordance with Saul Alinsky's dictum: "Low overhead, high independence," the Administration would have a lot of well-organized communities to reckon with instead of marginal, mini-social service agencies with no popular support.

'An Opiate For Conscience'

For that matter let Professor Sampson cross-examine Vietcong fighters about the evils of power. They know from first-hand evidence what even ordinary people can do with power and determination not to give in to superior force.

Dr. May's book is important. The book is tentative, and the tone is agonizing because, I imagine, that Dr. May has only recently become aware that therapy with individuals must be matched with therapy to the institutions and structures of society which so affect people's lives and sanity. He has to struggle with these tensions because there is no other way. Social justice requires power. Poor, hard working people don't have money enough to make a difference, so they get power by grouping together around shared ideas and interests. They learn quickly that it is not tough speeches and manifestos that change society's power distribution, but neither does it happen by standing meekly with cap in hand waiting their turn in a line someone else controls. No, they learn to take what they need from the American Pie through negotiation, compromise, boycott, strike, organized vote campaigns and an endless variety of other tactics. And eventually when society knows they are not going away, they will be dealt with in what political scientists call "rational discourse."

People who are weak and afraid have trouble getting the oppressor off their backs. It's like the elephant who sat down on the mouse. He had no inkling of the violence he was causing the mouse just by sitting down. The poor mouse's squeaks of pain never even reached the ears of his oppressor. The mouse in the parable has to come up

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with a real show-stopper just to get the elephant's attention.

I wish we would all read carefully Dr. May's book and help him in his search for the sources of violence. A little more information in that area can be very healthy in a democratic society, especially one going through the painful identity pangs of a post-industrial era. Our foreign policy no less than our domestic policy will not mature by denying power, but by channeling its energy through the full Constitutional process and extensive public debate.

Finally, *Power and Innocence* is a good book despite its flaws, because its author, unlike its reviewer, knows that the truth is never simple, at least in this vale of tears. My favorite passage on power comes from the Social Gospel theologian, Walter Rauschenbusch. He thought that contemporary problems required an updating of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Rauschenbusch asks what would have happened if the Samaritan came by every day to find men naked and bleeding by the roadside. After a while, the theologian reasoned, he would have been forced, if only by the exhaustion of his donkey, to raise a posse and go after the bandits.

I think Rollo May understands the new version of the parable. In *Power and Innocence* he is asking us to join him in searching beyond symptoms for cures.

P. DAVID FINKS
Coordinator, Action Planning Center
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Reply

Bristol, England

To the Editors: "Power," says Mr. Finks, has in our culture a connotation of such unrelieved evil that we may have to refrain from using the word. We need to be careful lest we confuse a widespread cynicism about politicians and "power" with a sincere recognition by the individual that the will to power is potential in himself as in others and that he ought to strive to overcome it within himself. The cynicism *is* common in our culture; the latter recognition regrettably is not. "Power" is a simple, indispensable word signifying something all too real and pervasive.

Mr. Finks refers to "our present guilt" over United States use of military power to crush civil wars in Indochina. The guilt is there all right, so much so that the thing occasioning it, viz., U.S. military aggression against the people of Indochina, is not correctly named, but finds expression in a mythical putting down of civil wars. Mr. Finks—with the detachment of one whose sympathies are apparently enlisted on both sides of this murderous struggle—then summons the Vietcong as witnesses to the virtue of power. The American invaders of Vietnam have exhibited a calculated ferocity and cruelty outmatching the Vandals. Nevertheless, the Vietcong had no right to murder them. When you put a bullet into a man, to say you are defending freedom or your country is a further example of the retreat into euphemism to conceal truth. You are not defending freedom; what you *are* doing is killing a man, and you have no right to do so. George Washington and his cohorts were also once "freedom fighters" seeking power to rid themselves of a hateful imperial yoke. They gained their independence and "freedom," and their heirs used it to kill red men, black men, white men in a "brothers' war" and latterly yellow men in S.E. Asia. Vietcong power will mercifully not have comparable scope; but those who feel their goad will not relish it.

Mr. Finks' other witnesses to the virtue of power—he may be embarrassed by the word 'power,' but he is not at all embarrassed by the thing signified—are Cesar Chavez, the oppressed and exploited poor, people facing reductions in federal anti-poverty programs. "Social justice requires power," he writes. People—all manner of people—have been getting power since time immemorial, but social justice remains an ever beckoning mirage on the horizon and the poor are always with us, more and more poor, ever hungrier in a world of ever increasing technological marvels of productivity. I doubt whether there is any country where the people are better organized to demand social justice than in Britain, where there is a very powerful Labor movement. We exemplify perfectly Mr. Finks' admired "democracy" relying on negotiations, compromise, boycott, strikes, votes, constitutional process, endless public debate, especially this last.

What happens? The Palace sets the example by helping itself to an extra million pounds, the Prime Minister gives himself a raise of £6,000, judges and senior civil-servants receive "awards" of up to 30 percent, M.P.'s and Professors being well up in front and shareholders basking in a shower of golden dividends. Then, as prices soar, each body of workers (the actual producers) strikes in turn, paralyzing essential services in order to protect their living standards and differentials against the deadly spiral of inflation. The Press with the unction of the proverbial crocodile denounces the workers for holding the public to ransom. The simple truth is that we have all got our snouts in the trough, where the physically weakest get least, in an exhibition of greed and public humiliation difficult to parallel. Within the nation the poor are the pensioners, the unemployed, members of the weakest unions. In the world at large those with the begging bowls are the peasants in countries with the least heavy industry, the least political autonomy, and the minimum access to capital. What sort of social justice is this?

Mr. Finks' metaphor of the elephant squashing the inaudibly suffering mouse is vivid, but does not, I think, get to the root of the matter. To begin with, the elephant only is an elephant because he has bamboozled and intimidated enough mice to obey him to enable him to enjoy his elephantine power. Secondly, Mr. Finks needs to be rather more specific as to what kind of 'real show-stopper' he has in mind. It is sufficient if the mouse will withdraw his oath of allegiance and disobey; a violent 'show-stopper' is neither permissible nor efficacious.

The up-dated version of the beauti-

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ful story of the Good Samaritan, which Professor Finks cites, is regrettable and saddening. Does he really not see while his (no-longer-good) Samaritan is sending for a posse of police or soldiers, other (no-longer-good) Samaritans are doing likewise elsewhere; and that the relation between these rival posses of armed men is then inevitably one of latent or overt warfare to determine which posse is to have the power over the other posse? For whoever controls the maximum available armed power is the Government, and whoever is the Government is in a state of permanent armed vigilance *vis à vis* other Governments. The parable of the Good Samaritan illuminates unforgettably the spiritual profundity of compassion. The revised version of the no-longer-good Samaritan contains within it all the seeds necessary for the arms race in all its current horror.

But Mr. Finks is absolutely correct when he writes: "People who are weak and afraid have trouble getting the oppressor off their backs." I would have thought that most of us are in this category, and that our problem is to find a remedy for our weakness and our fear. We surely do not have to look far. Within each of us there is a still, small voice which, if we listen carefully, tells us when we are wriggling to evade painful truth. In addition to this voice, there is also a desire, however vacillating and stumbling, to follow the Truth. The Truth is the same for us all; it is impartial and does not discriminate between human beings. It is very simple; otherwise it would be the prerogative of the erudite, the learned and the privileged. And it is not their prerogative. Quite the contrary! It is that we should not do to others what we would not wish done to ourselves, namely, that we should try to love our neighbor and not coerce him nor be complicit in coercing him. This does not mean that we obey the powerful, awaiting their pleasure cap in hand. But it does mean that we do not emulate their coercive methods.

There are always those who are eager to assure us that the Truth alone is not enough, that it just won't work, that

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it is not realistic. This is false. But the Truth does require that we give it sincere voice, that we honor it without qualification at least with our word. The power of the Word is then ultimately invincible. Its enemies know this and hence strive with all their power—made up of our lack of moral strength—to confuse us, to persuade us that the Truth we know in our hearts is not really true, to make us feel ashamed or priggish in trying humbly to do what is right even when isolated and alone. The greatest manifestation of God's presence in the world is the simple will to be good, often quavering, often stifled, often frightened and confused, but somewhere always there in each one of us. The curious paradox is that the more it is persecuted, the more its voice is silenced seemingly for ever by brute violence, in the ensuing shocked silence, its voice sounds ever more loudly, more imperatively in our ears.

RONALD SAMPSON
Department of Politics,
University of Bristol

BOOKS

GENUS: AMERICAN-JEWISH

SAUL MALOFF

The dust jacket of this symptomatic book is designed as a field of blue lettered over in red (or reddish-orange) and white: a coup, someone must have thought, of subliminal statement—lest we forget "American-Jewish" writers are also, if not in the first place, *American*. Oddity does not cease there. This being a collection of critical essays, the principal subjects, as distinct from "others" mentioned in passing are listed (in white): Saul Bellow, Irving Howe, Norman Mailer, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Karl Shapiro, Lionel Trilling.

The mind boggles. What, one wonders, staring at the list, the book still unopened, is the tie that binds these names into a list providing some overview of something called Contemporary American-Jewish Literature. They are all, one way or another, Jewish (just as Terence Cooke and Daniel Berrigan are both priests, James Baldwin and James Weldon Johnson black, Cesare Pavese and Mario Puzo Italian); not one of them would deny being Jewish, and some of them would, if the circumstances were right, affirm it; but apart from this what is it that unites the constituent elements of that variously gifted writer Bellowmalamudroth, and what has Trilling in common with Singer, Mailer with Howe, any of them with the "others," Shapiro with anybody?

The mind, recoiling from spurious unities, throngs with differences and distinctions. Only a man mesmerized by a thesis, enflamed by fortuitous circumstances, can still think of Bellow and Malamud (a fateful linkage both must hate in their souls) as significantly related; and anyone who compounds the confusion by adding Roth as the third person of a Jewish trinity, or at least a prodigal son, might just as well tie Updike to Marquand because they are white, Protestant, and novelists of manners. Mailer has made a great point of being like no other writer, anointed or heathen, and he has largely succeeded in this enterprise. Singer, that marvelous fabulist, is American-Jewish only to the literary critics of the Census Bureau; being, of course, the last of the major Yiddish writers, an adult and a writer before he was American even as a statistic. Shapiro, the only poet under scrutiny, is included by whim. (Evidently the essay was written prior to publication of Shapiro's only novel, which is as Jewish, though not nearly as nourishing, as blood pudding.) And after one had duly noted that Trilling and Howe are both critics and both sons of Jewish mothers, what then is one to say? (Where in all this is Ginsberg? Isn't he Jewish, albeit Hindu?) Aren't women members of the congregation? What about Cynthia Ozick, a writer of formidable talent, and deeply, avowedly "Jewish," as well as Jewish.

Contemporary American-Jewish Literature
IRVING MALIN, EDIT.
Indiana University Press, $7.95

Books such as these are constructed less by reason of intrinsic or literary-critical necessity than by extrinsic or academic-guild exigencies. The lesser university presses, and even some of the older ones, are becoming trendier (a decade after the impetus), bestirring themselves to get with it, with predictably depressing results; and in our departments of English, along with so much else that is ruinous of literary culture, courses and seminars in every permutation of contemporary, proliferate and become vested interests; no doubt books published this spring will be taught next autumn—the overnight fate in their time of Friedman's *Stern* and Markfield's *To An Early Grave*; reading lists pulled magically out of a hat in the first place will be revised as this author, so recently touted, goes west, and that one comes into brief prominence. As long as the trade remains brisk, one book will suffice to constitute a "breakthrough," two an "impulse," three a "school," four a "movement," and upwards of that a "literature." (Who among us would simply refuse to believe that someone, somewhere, is right now offering a course in Contemporary Irish-American

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Literature in which he discourses on—make up your own list—James T. Farrell, Tom McHale, Mary McCarthy, forgiven her Jewish grandmother, and Flannery O'Connor?)

Movements are no laughing matter; in fact anyone in the house who laughs, dies. "Only those too perverse or fuzzy-headed to recognize cultural facts," writes one of the essayists here, hand hovering over (empty) holster, "now refuse to acknowledge the existence of a Jewish Movement in contemporary American writing, and especially the writing of fiction." Jewish drama is cruelly scanted: Elmer Rice, Clifford Odets, Arthur Miller, Neil Simon, Israel Horowitz—and in suggesting these playwrights at random I'm not even straining; as for Jewish poetry, an enterprising editor could fill a multivolume series.

But to continue. Having just decreed a Movement (caps in original) and designated the obligatory first team or varsity (Bellowmalamudroth) its founder thereupon swells its ranks by enlisting "an entire second string of writers of varying ages and abilities, Leslie Fiedler, Herbert Gold, Bruce Jay Friedman, to name but three" which is "not to speak of the Popular Front: e.g. Herman Wouk, Leon Uris, Jerome Weidman"; and since by analogy to the famous argument that Atheists are actually, whether or not they know it, God-seekers, "even those not aligned with the Movement," such as Norman Mailer and J. D. Salinger, "contribute to it indirectly with an occasional half-Jewish hero and secularized Jewish *schmerz*." He stops just short of extrapolating from this melange a bold new category which he might have called Contemporary Half-Jewish-American Literature.

Regrettably, concocted collections of essays by many hands built on shifting foundations are felt to require girding in the form of an editor's introduction; here dutifully provided. What to say? How to provide gravity to hold between its covers so tenuous a gathering—diverse as to subjects, themes, preoccupations and emphases, the quality of critics, ranging from very good through pedestrian and lackluster to plodding and silly. (It is worth noting that the best of the essays are reprinted and were written many years before the scheme was devised.) The honorable editorial tactic is not to introduce the essays at all—to let them stand or fall on their merit; or to make the usual listless and superfluous remarks on the most notable of them in the hope that someone will perceive a design in the ragged assortment.

The other tactic, and the one adopted here, is that of the portentous broadside by which the editor settles old scores and grievances, metes out reward and punishment, lays down the law, smites hip and thigh, routs enemies and rivals, including future pretenders to a domain he regards as his, establishes the canon and posts rules of admission to supplicants: the editor as guardian of the gates. Now the Jewish comedy begins, only this time it is inadvertent. We begin with the Movement again, for without it there is no possible justification for the book; and we must come in fast with Bellowmalamudroth, for without significant writers you may have a massing but not a Movement, especially the "only movement in twentieth century American literature as important as the 'Southern Renaissance.' " And now we need a thesis, a perspective, an ideology, something big, really big: we get it in the form of a " 'theological' framework," in the bounds of which "they consciously or unconsciously celebrate traditional religious moments (exile, covenant, transcendence, etc.) Even when they are most 'modern,' they dramatize the heritage they cannot escape." By which token, Joyce was a Jew if not an American; and author of the central text of the canon.

But hark, the editor "hear[s] objections": how can *Portnoy's Complaint*, for example, he asks rhetorically, be considered "theological"—a book as "sexy" as *Playboy "theological?*" He happens to know the answer to that mystifying question: these writers "still retain their sense of irony and 'sacred rage'; they know that their 'complaints' are not merely physical or neurotic." Indeed the farther they stray the closer they are to home: the more Malamud takes Italy for his scene and Roth Middle America, "the more they affirm the source of their creative ambivalence," that source being—so wondrous are the ways of the Lord—"the search for new images of divinity in the absence of orthodox belief."

The sense of irony, as all truly passionate rhetoricians know, is distinctly Jewish; rage, where the currency of language is so reduced that one more or less makes no difference, becomes "sacred" rage; and "complaints"—well, from all these goings-on you might think Portnoy whacks off because God is dead. That procrustean bed is the one bed he never slept in.

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must somehow, anyhow, be met. With each phrase, the will to refute ponderous solemnities seeps away: one wants no more to argue with this tendentious reading of Malamud's Fidelman stories and Roth's *When She Was Good* and *Portnoy* than one does with the editor's crude misunderstanding of what Roth meant by his finely suggestive remark that the American Jewish writer "had to invent being a Jew" (quite as, he might have added, and in fact implies, the American writer had to invent being an American). The grandiloquent synthesis, like some law of nature, is inscribed in italics and written with characteristic infelicity: "*Only when a Jewish (by birth) writer, moved by religious tensions, shows 'ultimate concern' in creating a new structure of belief, can he be said to create 'Jewish' literature.*" By this token, there's very little Jewish-American literature to speak of: it may be said to apply, if it applies at all, to the work of a few lesser writers of explicitly religious preoccupations. If other work is to be made to fit those strictures, mayhem must first be committed upon its body. The disabling flaw at the heart of this attempt to process the intractable materials into a thesis is that it falsifies the nature of the imagination prevailing in this body of literature, which is secular, historical, humane, worldly —of this time and place.

Does this mean we can't speak of contemporary Jewish-American literature? Of course not—but first we must clear the air of cant, beginning with the aggrandizing misappropriation of trendy terms from theological discourse. What we'll be left with is something without which American writing of the past generation would be grievously impoverished: some first-rate writers; a shockingly large number of talented ones; a field of force, a deep source of powerful energy that has touched wide areas of the general literary culture; an unmistakable tone of voice and intensities of feeling. Some no doubt are moved in part by "religious tensions," though this may be expected to diminish in time, as writers grow younger and younger; and most are concerned ultimately, even as you and I, by merely human ones. Each is his own writer, a member of a movement of one.

They are American writers, city-bred and street-shrewd, and still close enough to the immigrant experience to hear its echoes, feel and be shaped by its inner and enacted life. They carry in their deep being the sediment of ancestral memories and a knowingness about survival; and the burden of a particular moral consciousness that amounts to queasiness. Behind them is an immensely vital language and very much with them is what happened to that language in America and in their own heads. They had, some of them, a cast of characters ready-made, the dramatic epic of the Jewish family romance and the temperatures of Jewish life, which may be bad for the blood pressure but is good for literature. Above all, they had their own experience of being Jews in America, never quite of it, an awkward, fertile, painful and curiously exhilarating condition which is also good for writers, and bad for cultural ecumenism and liberal pieties about pluralism and melting pots and universalism. They got stuck in the country's craw.

V. S. Naipaul, speaking about himself—a Trinidadian of East Indian descent living in London and adrift in the Third World and the "Third World's third world"—might be addressing himself to that famous clown the Jewish-American writer when he remarks that being an "outsider," "cut off," a "colonial," "a little ridiculous and unlikely" has been "a necessary stimulus" to him. Neither is this a definitive statement, but it has far more to do with the art of American Jews, with a sense of oddity, a special exacerbation of feeling and tilted angle of vision, and it strikes far closer to the quick than all those essentially doctrinal and parochial (and in the main inapplicable) pronouncements about religious tensions, sacred rage, ultimate ground, new images of divinity, and things like that.

The Stranger in Shakespeare

LESLIE A. FIEDLER

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MARK TAYLOR

The most radical of the last decade's criticism of Shakespeare shares with commentaries of earlier ages the old assumptions of his universality, follows the Johnsonian formula that he held a faithful mirror up to manners and life, but departs from them in making this universality testament not to Shakespeare's grandeur and omniscience but to his limitations and pettiness. Such I find the achievement of Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964), whatever its intention; though a reading of Samuel Beckett in the light of Shakespeare might be most stimulating, Kott reads Shakespeare in the light of Beckett, substantially reducing, for example, the breadth and the wonder of *King Lear*.

Where Kott only narrows Shakespeare's vision, Leslie Fiedler now diminishes his humanity, though allowing to him sublime expression of the mythopoeic fears of that part of peoplekind that is white, Christian, and male. Strangers, for Fiedler, are "creatures disturbingly like [men of a particular culture] in certain respects, who yet do not quite fit (or worse, seem to have rejected) their definition of what it means to be human." For a man of Shakespeare's milieu, strangers include women, Jews, Negroes, and New World savages, toward all of whom Shakespeare felt at best an unease and at worst hatred and terror. Fiedler illustrates this argument with an introduction relating these phobias to the man Shakespeare and then with chapters on Joan of Arc in *Henry VI, Part I*, Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Othello in *Othello*, and Caliban in *The Tempest*. Although all but the first of these are the only possible representatives of their respective types developed at great enough length by Shakespeare to accommodate the case

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Fiedler wishes to make, Fiedler insists that each is valid as an epitome of his or her type, that Joan, for instance, shares with Shakespeare's other women—even unto Juliet, Cordelia, and Desdemona (and presumably with all women as he saw them in real life)—the identity of castrating witch.

If, in outline, this reading of Shakespeare sounds quite fantastic, if it seems unfaithful to the world's accumulated experience of the plays, and if it smacks suspiciously of bargain-basement psychoanalysis and the "hidden meaning" school of literary criticism, let me insist that the book's development of the argument only intensifies such impressions. Fiedler's demonstration of what he calls Shakespeare's "private mythology," that is, Shakespeare's *own* fears of the stranger, depends ultimately on a little volume of poetry named *The Passionate Pilgrim*, published in 1599 by William Jaggard and containing twenty poems of which five, certainly, are by Shakespeare (three lyrics that had already been printed in *Love's Labor's Lost* and the two sonnets that would become numbers 138 and 144 of the 1609 edition of the Sonnets). Although there is no evidence that Shakespeare authorized the appearance of these poems, despite the inclusion of his name on the volume's title page, although, instead, there is considerable evidence that he opposed their appearance, Fiedler assumes that their very presence here makes them the key to everything else. "No one can finally doubt, however, that Jaggard's selection . . . reflects Shakespeare's own view of what he was after, or, at least, that of someone from the circle of 'private friends' in which the Sonnets had first circulated."

Anyone who knows anything about the opportunism and dishonesty of Elizabethan printers will disagree, but for Fiedler the cancellation of this doubt justifies a reading of *all* the Sonnets as a projection of number 144: "If all the sonnets except for this were to disappear tomorrow, we would be left in possession not only of the story Shakespeare tries to tell but also of the moral it is intended to convey"—a ridiculous statement but an easy way of dismissing the thousand complexities and problems that the Sonnets, as a whole, present. (Critics like Edward Hubler who have made honest and perceptive efforts to confront these complexities receive no mention in Fiedler's book.) Fiedler is right that, in some sense, sonnet 144 describes a "noble" man "contaminated by" a "vile" woman, but it is preposterous to conclude, therefore, that such contamination is the primary motive of the whole sequence; that men in general are noble and women are vile; and that wherever we find a man-woman relationship in one of the plays we may take sonnet 144 as Shakespeare's personal commentary on it.

What the sonnets leave incomplete in Shakespeare's private mythology, Fiedler argues, is amply filled in by *Love's Labor's Lost*, the original locus of Shakespeare's other certain contributions to *The Passionate Pilgrim*. This play gives Fiedler some trouble, for even he cannot ignore the obvious truth that the all-male academy of Berowne and his friends is one object of the play's satire, despite Fiedler's overriding conviction that, for Shakespeare, an all-male academy should be the *ne plus ultra* of human associations. Fiedler tries to resolve this apparent contradiction by finding, through, let us say, a rather specialized reading of highly selective passages of Berowne's speeches, a strong undercurrent of self-hatred, which evidently means that Shakespeare, who equals Berowne, detested himself for the exclusive preference for male companionship that better judgment (or God knows what) told him was shameful.

In general, it is by disregarding most of the text and the accrued commentaries thereon, together with ascribing to Shakespeare personally the highly idiosyncratic beliefs of some of his characters, that Fiedler reaches such extraordinary judgments as these: an "anti-feminist rage . . . moved him when he wrote *Henry VI*"; there is a "paranoia about blacks which Shakespeare shared with the pit"; and "exploited outsiders tend to resemble each other strangely, so that women and Jews fall together not only in Shakespeare but in the imagination of the Western world as a whole." For example, Fiedler makes much of Portia's subverting her dead father's will, in *The Merchant of Venice*, by obliquely indicating to Bassanio which casket he should choose. Having betrayed a father, she might betray a husband as well. The possibility of subversion here has been discussed, on and off, for at least one hundred years, but since the majority of critical opinion denies it (see John Russell Brown's arguments against Portia's duplicity in the Arden edition of the play), Fiedler should

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argue his case, if he can, and not merely erase what others have done. Again, Fiedler quotes words of King Lear to show Shakespeare's hysterical "hatred and fear of female sexuality," ignoring utterly the actions of Goneril and Regan in the play as well as the fact that Lear's intense anti-sexuality at this moment is a dramatic objectification of his madness.

Leslie Fiedler claims, in the preface to *The Stranger in Shakespeare*, that he has tried to write "not another book about 'Our Shakespeare,' but one about 'Shakespeare's Us.' " In fact, he has written a first book on "Fiedler's Shakespeare," which happens also to be yet another book, there are many, on "Fiedler's Us." Frankly, I cannot recognize either character.

Triple Cross

CARLOS FUENTES, JOSE DONOSO, SEVERO SARDUY

Trans. by Suzanne Jill Levine & Hallie D. Taylor

Dutton, $8.95

Seven Voices

RITA GUIBERT

Trans. by Frances Partridge

Knopf, $10

RONALD CHRIST

Knowing how to read is knowing how to listen. It's simply a matter, for once, of shutting up—even Evelyn Wood has to silence the subvocal talker in you—and attending to someone else's words. Knowing how to write, on the other hand, is knowing how to talk—after having listened. It's complicatedly the business of speaking to the absent Other in hopes that for once you'll be heard. Understandably, then, *voice* dominates much contemporary fiction, which seeks dramatic form to guarantee integrity to its speakers; and, not so obivously, voice begins to control criticism, which increasingly tells fictions about fiction in the shape of interviews, thus establishing that same integrity, this time, though, for characters outside the book or books discussed.

These two books exercise those powers respectively. *Triple Cross* is a collection of three novellas, written independently but all linked by their concern with fictive technique, brazen theatricality and theological reference as well as metamorphosis, movies, metaphysics and music. Of the three, Donoso's "Hell Has No Limits" is least audible in its minimal manipulation of chronology and psychology to vocalize a traditional narration about the drag queen father of a Madam in a decaying town; Fuentes' "Holy Place" is most muffled as it blurs the simple story of a famous Mexican actress and her neglected, misfit son with voice-overs from Antonioni, Fellini, Visconti and the Greek myths. (It's all *roman à clef*, of course, and one of the brightest things in it is an almost verbatim transcription of the actress' repartee with some interviewers; but don't worry, keys of this kingdom are easy to come by.)

Sarduy's three-part "From Cuba with a Song" is most vocal, chorusing everything the other authors spoke and much more in a noisy fiesta where a general unwittingly loves an Empress in the Chinese Opera played by a female impersonator, and hermaphroditic characters named Help and Mercy bear all and no allegorical weight as they cross Cuba with a statue of Christ—who is "delighted that they ran behind Him, that they wore out the wood of his feet with kisses, that they perfumed Him with *aqua ardiente*" because "He had the calling of a redeemer, blondie did, He liked flags." But there's nothing special in Sarduy's giving voice to that decaying statue because everybody talks back in this cha-cha tragedy, including the author who defends himself against his characters' accusations. Obviously,

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REVIEWERS

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each of these novellas camps entertainingly and, at times, poignantly, but only Sarduy voices a magnificent glossolalia driven by a boom-chicka-boom rhythm. Sinister as Eva Peron is dead, funny as Dolores del Rio is beautiful, witty and intelligent as La Lupe is possessed, "From Cuba with a Song" is, finally, as ambitious as Carmen Miranda's hats —a gleaming glyptograph.

The eighth voice in *Seven Voices* is the author's and it will be the wonder of the book to many. For unlike Sarduy —unlike most interviewers—Rita Guibert forgoes cleverness and prides herself on listening: "I tried to evoke a maximum response with a minimum of questioning." So great is her success that she is almost invisible in her interviews, asking questions that often don't even aspire to interrogation but eliciting answers that establish this book as a major document in the history of Latin American literature and an impressive testament to each of its subjects. So great is her success that although I worked with her on minor parts of the book I can say with full objectivity and absolute *pre*judice that the interviews themselves (with which I had nothing to do) are brilliant and indispensable—fundamental texts for anyone interested in literature, Latin or not.

Of course others have tried what Rita Guibert has achieved. *Into the Mainstream*, for example, interviewed some of the same authors but it dyed them prose purple, so never before *Seven Voices* have we been able to confront major Latin American authors speaking so authoritatively for themselves at such a consistently high level of discourse with such a minimum of interviewer's static. Here Neruda, Borges, Asturias, Paz, Cotázar, García Márquez and Cabrera Infante accomplish their own voices in forms so different as punningly revised playfulness (Cabrera Infante), elegantly simple understatement (Borges), cautiously written reply (Cortázar) and naively direct colloquialism (Neruda). To most readers, the Paz interview will be most significant—several important magazines have already excerpted it—and it may get for Paz the hearing his books have begged for years, maybe, ironically enough, because one person had good sense *not* to voice her praise or opinion and apparently just listen. Apparently.

So, with one interested interviewer, who is almost the little woman who isn't there, and three good novelists, who most assuredly are all there, we have eleven voices for a literature that at once finds perfect introduction and justification in these two books. And that's no double-cross.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 229)

just one vote like tiny Samoa. Maybe it would be better to leave things as they are and have 12 American Cardinals in the Conclave. And who would want an American Pope anyway? I guess certain reforms should not come in a hurry.

EDUARD EVANS

Rockville, Md.

To the Editors: Your editorial "New Cardinals" [Mar. 23] brought to my mind a potential the College of Cardinals has in demonstrating in fact and theory the idea that the Pontifical Office is the Office of the Church.

This could be accomplished by naming not only Bishops and Patriarchs, but Priests, Religious and Lay People to the College of Cardinals (for a certain term). They could be named to the College on the basis of their good standing in the (Church) Community and/or because they are experts in some way in the World Community.

Their purpose would be to advise the Pope and to elect a successor should that be necessary. I suspect the net result of this would be a clearer demonstration of the theory and fact that the Pontifical Office is the Office of the Church. The possible characteristics the Pontifical Office might acquire from an incumbent chosen by an electoral college of such a "Catholic" membership might very well help clarify this characteristic of the Pontifical Office in the Church Community.

CHARLES J. FITTI

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

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